

LIBYA

JPRS-TOT-87-014-L

## AL-QADHDHAFI INTERVIEWED ON MIDEAST, TERRORISM

LD120159 London ITV Television Network in English 2030 GMT 11 Feb 87

[Report on interview with Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi by correspondent Eamonn McCann on the "Diverse Reports" program, presented by Editor Philip Clarke; interview conducted in Libya, date not given — recorded; Al-Qadhdhafi speaks in Arabic with English subtitles providing the translation, except where noted that translation is provided by translator's voice]

[Text] [Clarke] Just under a year ago the Americans bombed Libya: Some of their planes took off from Britain. The action was widely condemned. But the raid did silence Colonel al-Qadhdhafi for a while. But he's now keen to return to the world's stage. Our reporter, Eamonn McCann, has just come back from Libya, where he talked to Al-Qadhdhafi at some length in the colonel's first major political interview for some time. Eamonn is a committed socialist, and perhaps more sympathetic to Libya than most Western journalists. Much of the discussion about Libya tends to be in slogans and gives a picture of the country that Libyans themselves hardly recognize. So Eamonn's report is an attempt to see Libya and events in the Middle East from their point of view.

[McCann] The sleeping capital erupted into a ground-to-air battle, tracer fire arching skywards. [video shows tracer bullets streaking into night sky, followed by scenes of destruction in Tripoli]

[Tripoli resident ('Ali Bessiuni), identified by caption] It was uncivilized act, in fact, and I feel it was a barbarian act against the innocent people.

[McCann] More than 50 people were killed in Tripoli and Benghazi as American bombs blasted residential areas. Col al-Qadhdhafi's home was among those hit; his family among the victims of the raid.

[Al-Qadhdhafi] Thatcher is a murderer, malevolent to such an extent that she allowed Britain to be used as a base by America, the most powerful country in the world, knowing that those planes were destined to destroy my house and kill my children. Of course one feels very hurt, wounded, and frustrated, because on one hand it's a flagrant injustice and on the other it's an expression of Western hatred towards Libya. Not just because it's Libya, but because their hatred extends to the whole Arab and Islamic world.

[McCann] The intention was, apparently, to kill Al-Qadhdhafi, or to create conditions in Libya in which he might be overthrown. Al-Qadhdhafi survived: As an effort to destabilize Libya, the attack failed. Support for Al-Qadhdhafi and his revolution seems unshaken.

Libya is commonly regarded in the West as the terrorist state, with its leader, Col al-Qadhdhafi, as a madman. But from the point of view of the Libyan people, this is a grotesque distortion of the truth. When you understand Libyan history, generations of struggle against foreign domination, which ended less than 20 years ago, then perhaps you can begin to understand the way they see themselves, and see the rest of the world. Libya was under foreign occupation for centuries; it was a province of the Ottoman Empire until 1911. Then the Italians came.

[Al-Qadhdhafi] We have suffered repeatedly at the hands of Europe. In fact we were colonized by the Italians in 1911 before the fascists and Mussolini took power. They colonized and attacked us unexpectedly, killed our people, destroyed our nation and set up places for people to be hanged. They abducted thousands of men and women and took them to Italy. To this day we have been asking the Italians to tell us what happened to those thousands of Libyans — they were innocent people.

[McCann] Italian rule, during which at least 100,000 Libyans were killed, ended with the victory of the 8th Army in the desert campaign. Libya was devastated in the battles between the two European armies.

[Al-Qadhdhafi] Who triggered the First World War and the Second World War? Who spread war in Africa, Asia, and Latin America? Was it the Africans who started two world wars? Were they Asians? Or people from Latin America? No, it was them!

[McCann] The land was left littered with the debris of someone else's war. In 1951, Libya became formally independent, after the great powers failed to agree on [word indistinct]. Determined to maintain some control, the British installed and then patronized the corrupt King Idris.

Libya was among the poorest countries of the world. Average income was \$35 per year. Masses of people lived in rag tents in the desert, or in slum shantytowns. But in fact beneath the desert

there lay an ocean of oil, which Western companies were quick to exploit. A rising generation resented foreign ownership of Libya's new riches; and that feeling, expressed in an upsurge of armed nationalism, carried a group of young army officers to power in 1969. The takeover was bloodless: It was organized by this man, Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi.

[(Bessiuni)] There was no Libya here before the revolution. There were, of course — the Americans maintained the main base here which they called Wheeler, and they used it against the Arab population in most parts of the Arab world. And in Benghazi, of course, it was a British garrison there, with British troops. And in Sabha, in the north, it was the French there — it was occupied by French. The imperialists, they use their puppets in this country against their natives. But after the revolution everything was changed.

[McCann] Every aspect of life in Libya today is touched both by the legacy of colonial rule and by the revolutions' promise of a new and more equal society, in which, for the first time, Libyans could have power in Libya.

[Al-Qadhafi] Generally speaking, the revolutionary plan is proceeding successfully. But certainly we are still suffering from what remains of the European domination of our people and their attempts to make us lose our self-confidence. We have been used to being ruled by invaders from Europe generation after generation. Our people had no experience of independence except under the revolution.

[McCann] The most immediate effect of the revolution on the lives of Libyans was a massive improvement in the standard of living. Al-Qadhafi himself personally supervised the clearing away of the slums. The country has undergone a massive transformation. Under law, the state must now provide every family with a home. The health and education systems are free and available to all. More than half of Libya's 4 million people are now at school, college, or university. Agricultural production has increased, boosted by an officially sponsored back-to-the-land movement, and by the biggest irrigation scheme ever undertaken anywhere. This kind of prosperity is a new experience for Libyans, as is the form of democracy introduced a decade ago. Every person in Libya is a member of a Basic People's Congress. This isn't democracy on the Western model, but its the first experience of self-rule Libyans have known — and for them it works. The thinking of Col al-Qadhafi is enormously influential, but some of Al-Qadhafi's proposals, to do with education and women's rights, have been rejected. Despite this, Libyan women feel that they have made significant advances.

[Unidentified female in Arabic, with translation provided via captions] As Libyan women, we are in a much better position than other Arab women, particularly when it comes to arguments and debates, as it clearly shown by our role in people's congresses where we take part and express our views freely.

[McCann] Many of these ideas are threatening to more conservative Arab regimes, content to hold Al-Qadhafi at arms length. But its his radical anticolonialism which has made him a threatening figure to the West. The revolution of 1969 was motivated not only by the Libyans' desire to assert sovereignty at last over their own territory, but reflected, too, a belief that the Arabs are a single nation, divided and dominated for centur-

ies by colonial powers. Libyans see the existence of the State of Israel, on what to them is Arab land, as a last intolerable example of the colonial presence, and thus the struggle against Israel as the key to ultimate Arab liberation. Under this context, they see the United States as the agent of the State of Israel.

[Al-Qadhafi] Unfortunately, a new crusader-like spirit has emerged in the West which is anti-semitic, and of course we the Arabs are semites. Witness the unlimited support given to Israel in order to annihilate Arabs and destroy the Arab nation as a whole, enabling them without any protest or reservation to build nuclear bombs. Doesn't this show malice and bad intentions against the Arab?

[Unidentified voice] This means, then, there is spite against the Arabs and that they should be destroyed.

[Al-Qadhafi] Isn't that the theme of Western policy?

[McCann] Al-Qadhafi hasn't always been so hostile to the West. Although the regime's first target were the British and American bases established during the Second World War, he negotiated their peaceful removal. It was a popular move. Relations with the West remained reasonably friendly because Al-Qadhafi's nationalism was also hostile to Soviet influence. Al-Qadhafi sought unity with Egypt as a first step toward a single Arab nation, which might have the strength to win back a homeland for the Palestinians. Through the seventies, this spirit of Arab self-assertion, which he epitomized, was to bring Libya increasingly into conflict with the West. Libya was in the vanguard of the OPEC move, which quadrupled oil prices in 1973 and jolted the economies of the West. Next, Al-Qadhafi vigorously opposed the American-sponsored Camp David agreement, which detached Egypt from the Arab consensus on the question of Israel. The agreement was presented in the West as a major step toward an honorable peace; in the Arab world it was seen as nothing of the sort.

[Al-Qadhafi] Politically there have been a number of setbacks in the Arab world. One of them was the recognition by Egypt of the occupation of Palestine, their recognition of international Zionism, and their acceptance of the status quo. But I don't believe Egypt did these things because she was convinced, but rather because she was defeated in the 1973 war with Israel. [The preceding sentence, audible in Arabic, differs from ITV's English subtitle translation as follows:— But I believe Egypt did these things because it was defeated in war, not because it was convinced that Palestine should remain under Zionist occupation.]

[McCann] Politically, Al-Qadhafi had become a thorn in the side of the West. The first moves toward sanctions against Libya were made by the United States in 1979. Increasingly, Al-Qadhafi saw America as an implacable enemy of Libyan and Arab interests.

[Al-Qadhafi] The invaders have not allowed the Libyan people to live in peace. We have not been left alone to build up our country. Hence, we feel bitter.

[McCann] Do you believe that the United States has any legitimate interests at all in this region?

[Al-Qadhafi, superimposed by voice of translator] None whatsoever.

[McCann] It was that view which, more than anything else, has made Al-Qadhdhafi a focus for American hostility. Elected in 1980, Ronald Reagan reflected an American desire to reassert itself in the world. In Libyan eyes, American power was being deployed to ensure the continuing humiliation of Arabs, even at the expense of some other Western interests.

[Al-Qadhdhafi] Europe is known to be somewhat wise and rational but America is known to be childish, crazy, and irrational. The mentality of the cowboy and the criminal dominates U.S. policy.

[McCann] In August 1981, U.S. fighters shot down Libyan planes in a clash over the Gulf of Sidra. The pretext was that America had a duty to assert the right of free passage for shipping in the gulf. No effort had been made to establish this right in international law. Libyans argued that the gulf was not a strategic waterway, like Panama or Suez — that it leads to nowhere but Libya. What's more, the American position appeared both arrogant and hypocritical.

[Al-Qadhdhafi] It's a matter of sovereignty; it's not a question of whether it's useful or not. But the Gulf of Sidra is of great significance to Libya. It's an integral part of our territorial waters and historically Libya always exercised authority over it. Even those who colonized Libya, including the Americans, extended their domination over the Gulf of Sidra as part of their domination over Libya as a whole. The same with Britain after the Second World War. The Gulf of Sidra is vital for Libya. It separates the two halves of the country. We cannot allow military maneuvers. If you're talking about commercial vessels or tourism — ships coming to Libyan ports — we welcome this.

[McCann] In March 1986, the Americans attacked again, sinking Libyan patrol boats and bombing radar stations. At least 20 Libyans died. These attacks, as well as American support for the Israeli assault on Lebanon, had an inevitable effect on Libya's general orientation to world politics.

[Al-Qadhdhafi, superimposed by voice of translator] Because America has a global strategy and we are the victim of this strategy; they want to encircle and contain, in the end, the Soviet Union, and this containment is taking place through us. That's why we and the Soviet Union find ourselves facing a common enemy. An enemy is approaching the Soviet Union, but we find ourselves that we are the victim number one, using us as a springboard toward the Soviet Union, the ultimate end.

[McCann] It is American imperialism, then, which has compelled Libya and the Soviet Union to come closer together?

[Al-Qadhdhafi, superimposed by voice of translator] They serve the Russian-Libyan relations a great deal.

[McCann] To Libyans, all this looks very much like aggressive determination to reassert military domination over the Arab world, to turn the clock back. Meanwhile, we in the West have been told a very different story: Almost every major terrorist incident in Europe in the eighties has been attributed in much of the Western media to the malign activity of Libya and Al-Qadhdhafi.

What Libya has done is to support movements around the world seen as struggling against the old colonial powers. They openly proclaim their support for the Palestinians, as do most Arab countries.

[[Bessiani]] You call the fighters, the Palestinian fighters, when they are fighting for their freedom, you call them terrorists, but we call them a fighter, to free their nation; you can see in Lebanon how they feel; we feel very sorry about that, but all the West — not only America, but all the West — they're always on one side, on Israel's. They're always persuaded by Israel; and they always support the Israeli's point of view.

[McCann] But when you look for specific examples of what the Libyans are persistently charged with — the instigation of international terrorism — they are hard to find. Amnesty International estimates that there have been 19 victims of Libyan terrorism, all but 4 Libyan dissidents. Libya sees itself as being at war with anti-Al-Qadhdhafi groups. Such groups have assassinated a Libyan ambassador, and staged coup attempts. Libya does pursue the dissidents abroad.

It was during the demonstration by the National Front for the Salvation of Libya that woman police constable Yvonne Fletcher was shot dead. Despite Libyan denials, all the evidence is that the bullet which killed her came from Libyans inside at the embassy. It seems equally certain that WPC Fletcher was not the intended target.

[Al-Qadhdhafi] Though we are prepared to fight, it's not in our nature to kill innocent people. That policewoman could never have been a target for us. She was a security officer concerned with order and security and she didn't deserve to be killed.

[McCann] Through 1985, pressure in the United States mounted for action against Libya, as they were blamed for a series of dramatic terrorist attacks. These included the hijacking of a TWA airliner, and of the *Achille Lauro*; and the massacres at Rome and Vienna airports. No evidence has ever been produced linking Libya directly to these attacks. But it was another incident in April, last year, which produced the most unequivocal allegations against Libya. Far from proving Libyan guilt, the evidence which has emerged points toward Syria. But Syria is large and powerful. America used the Berlin bombing as a pretext for the raid on Libya.

[video shows President Reagan giving nationwide address on the bombing of Libya, saying that it was conducted in such a way as to minimize casualties among the Libyan people]

That's not the way they see it. In the conflict between Libya and the United States, the Libyans have been responsible for far fewer deaths than America. In broader perspective, their involvement in violent activity beyond their own borders is insignificant when compared with America's. Given their history, including their very recent history, Libyans have good reasons to regard themselves as the victims, rather than the villains, of international terrorism. Their perception of the West, and of what the West has done to them, has inevitably produced a fervor which could have very serious consequences.

[Al-Qadhdhafi] All these hostile acts against the Arab people are charging us up like a bomb which will one day explode, destroying British, American, and Zionist interests. We are now targetted by the United States, the most powerful state in the world. Yesterday it was America and Britain; today it is America and France. It is an historic period for us — both heroic and tragic. This will produce a generation that will retaliate. So, if a retaliatory generation emerges from this land it will have been created by them.

/9274

CSO: 5600/4606